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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
THURSDAY, JULY 30, 2009

In Today's Papers

The Government's 'Kurdish Initiative' - Still a work in progress
Media outlets report Interior Minister Besir Atalay held a press conference to announce the government's "democratic moves" regarding Turkey's Kurdish issue. Atalay said his government would "call on all political parties, civic organizations, intellectuals, the media and labor unions to be a part of the process." Atalay stressed that the experiences of many other countries were also examined with an aim to find a solution to the Kurdish problem, but added that Turkey would implement its own model. Atalay said his government would continue to take "determined, ambitious, patient and brave steps." "We believe the Kurdish Issue can be resolved by enhancing the democratic rights of our people," he emphasized. Atalay noted he examined the experiences of several other countries, and that he had met the interior ministers of Sweden and Spain to exchange opinions on such matters. "We are trying to set up our own model," concluded Atalay.

Papers largely applaud the announcement. Mainstream Haberturk headlines, "Ankara Adopts Historic Decision." Mainstream Vatan headlines, "The AKP Undertakes A Brave Step." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak headlines, "The Solution Is More Democracy." Leftist Taraf says, "The Turkish Formula Will Become A Model for The World." Meanwhile, leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet is more skeptical, "The government has announced a new initiative - the Interior Minister Atalay says the government is still working on steps for solving the Kurdish issue."

Meanwhile, mainstream Milliyet reports from Brussels that EU says every step taken toward a resolution of the problem will be a "positive mark" for Turkey's side. In the latest Partnership Document, the EU expects Turkey to "display a comprehensive approach to eliminate the inequalities between the regions; to improve economic, social and cultural opportunities for all Turkish citizens, including the Kurds; and to end the village guards system in southeastern Turkey."

Editorials on Turkish Government's Kurdish Initiative

Murat Yetkin wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Atalay's

announcement was disappointing for some who expected him to outline a clear-cut Kurdish solution package. However, this is a long term process and patience is required; it's like being a guest at a dinner party and having to eat the host's casserole, made of unknown ingredients, in a dimly lit dining room. In this process, the broader participation of opposition, including the DTP, will make it more successful."

Mumtazer Turkone wrote in Islamist Zaman: "Some may say Interior Minister Atalay did not give much substance regarding the government's Kurdish initiative during his press conference yesterday, but in fact he said a lot. The rhetoric he used and the approach he pursued meant a lot, which indicates that the state is headed in the right direction toward solving the problem."

Cuneyt Ulsever wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "The Interior Minister's announcement shows the government continues to lack the determination and political will to bear the risks involved in initiating a process to solve the problem. Atalay failed to communicate any substance or concrete plan, and he was evasive regarding the DTP's role in the process. All of these are main reasons not to be hopeful about the future of this initiative."

Erdal Safak wrote in mainstream Sabah: "If all sides are fully heard and if all participate in the solution process, Turkey can solve the problem by creating its own model to address the issue. In order to achieve that goal, a special parliamentary commission with all parties' representation is a must."

Ibrahim Karagul wrote in Islamist Yeni Safak: "Minister Atalay's

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announcement was clearly an indication of determination within the state to resolve the Kurdish problem. A state strategy is underway, and we can simply call it a freedom project for Turkey."

Justice Ministry: The HSYK Alone Cannot Change Prosecutors
Papers report the Justice Ministry reacted harshly to a statement signed by nine members of the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK). The ministry said in a statement, "HSYK is an administrative board, and cannot make judiciary inspections. Under the law, only the Justice Ministry grants permission for investigations into prosecutors, and the ministry has the authority to ask courts to reverse rulings." The statement noted that some of the board members wanted to change the chief public prosecutor, deputy chief public prosecutor, prosecutors and three judges in the controversial 'Ergenekon' case, report papers.

Fear of Civil War in Iraq (Milliyet)
Mainstream Milliyet and Sabah as well as leftist Cumhuriyet and Islamist Zaman highlight the meeting between U.S. Defense Secretary Gates and Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government President Massoud Barzani. Milliyet says, "American officials are very worried about the possibility that ethnic clashes, like the previous ones between Iraqi Sunnis and Shiites, could break out between the Kurds and Arabs after the U.S. withdrawal." Secretary Gates reportedly asked Barzani to resolve disputes between the Baghdad central government and KRG, including territorial issues as well the sharing of oil resources and division of authority. Gates asked them to ease Kurdish-Arab tension "before American forces pull out." Sabah also added the withdrawal of U.S. troops might be accelerated, even though Secretary Gates did not offer any specific timetable for withdrawal.

The U.S. Says Russia Could Join NATO
Mainstream Sabah and mainstream Star report that the U.S. has "opened NATO's door to Russia." During his testimony at the U.S. Congress, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Philip Gordon said "NATO's doors should be open to democracies in Europe. If Russia meets the criteria and can contribute to common security, and if there is consensus in the alliance, it shouldn't be excluded."

Turkey Reaffirms Determination to Normalize Relations With Armenia

Mainstream Sabah reports that at a joint press conference in Ankara

with the Bosnian Foreign Minister on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said that Turkish government is "still determined to normalize relations with neighboring Armenia." However, Davutoglu noted, "at the same time, it is important for us to see the same determination from the international community and especially from Armenia on the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan." Finally, Davutoglu responded to Armenian President Sargsyan's comments earlier this week that he would not come to Turkey for "football diplomacy" unless Turkey re-opened the border, describing this as "not very thoughtful."

Iraqi Security Forces Raid Iran's People's Mujahedeen's Camp Near Baghdad

Media outlets report that Iraqi security forces raided Esref Camp which shelters members of the Iranian opposition group People's Mujahedeen near Baghdad. The Iraqi police said 300 camp dwellers and more than 100 security members were wounded during clashes between police and the Iranians. The People's Mujahedeen claimed seven of their members were killed and 385 wounded. People's Mujahedeen members were disarmed following the U.S. invasion in 2003, says liberal Radikal.

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- DTP leader Ahmet Turk said the government should allow the PKK's

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leader Abdullah Ocalan to be an "interlocutor" while working on the Kurdish issue.

- Cyprus Turkish Airlines and its British tour operator CTA Holidays Limited have lost a legal bid to overturn a 35-year-old ban on flights from Britain to Turkish Cyprus, British media reported Wednesday.

- Turkey's Central Bank Governor Durmus Yilmaz says year-end inflation was expected to stand at 5.9 percent.

- The "3-G Technology" was officially introduced in Turkey. 3-G will allow subscribers to watch TV with their cellphones or enjoy super-fast internet connections.

World

-Rabiya Kadir, Uighur activist in exile, says "Nearly 10,000 Uighurs involved in deadly riots in China's northwestern Xinjiang region went missing in one night."

- Jordan has set up a special tribunal for "honor crimes" in an effort to speed up trials in the cases.

- Pope Benedict 16 attacks Glasgow Art Gallery's invitation to scrawl comments on the Bible, saying "'It is disgusting and offensive; they would not think of doing it to the Koran."

- Ireland will take in two detainees from the U.S. detention camp at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba within the next couple of months, a senior government official said.

JEFFREY